

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NEW DE 10329 061352Z  
ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2606  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 10329

TEHRAN FOR UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: OVIP  
SUBJECT: UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM'S VISIT:  
BACKGROUND MATERIALS

1. THIS MESSAGE ON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION IN INDIA IS THE FIRST OF SEVERAL BACKGROUND BRIEFING PAPERS PREPARED IN CONJUNCTION WITH UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM'S VISIT TO NEW DELHI:

2. DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION

3. PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S RULING JANATA PARTY IS AT PRESENT IN THE MIDST OF THE MOST SERIOUS INTERNAL CRISIS TO AFFLICT IT SINCE THE PARTY CAME TO POWER IN THE MARCH 1977 GENERAL ELECTIONS. THE BASIC CAUSE OF THE DISPUTE IS THE CLASH OF PERSONAL AMBITIONS BETWEEN DESAI HIMSELF AND FORMER HOME MINISTER CHARAN SINGH, THE LEADER OF THE SECOND LARGEST FAC- TION IN THE JANATA COALITION. THIS LONG-SIMMERING CLASH DATES FROM THE INCEPTION OF THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF LAST YEAR, WHEN DESAI AND CHARAN SINGH COMPETED FOR THE COVETED PRIME MINISTER- SHIP. DESAI WON THE NUMBER ONE JOB, BUT CHARAN SINGH WAS NEVER SATISFIED WITH HIS ROLE AS HOME MINISTER AND SECOND MOST IM- PORTANT MAN IN THE CABINET.

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4. AFTER NUMEROUS MINOR FLARE-UPS, THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THESE TWO ELDER FIGURES REACHED THE BREAKING POINT SHORTLY AFTER THE PRIME MINISTER RETURNED TO DELHI FROM THE U.S. LAST MONTH. DESAI BEGAN DEALING MORE STERNLY WITH HIS OPPONENTS IN THE PARTY, AND AT THE END OF JUNE HE SUMMARILY DISMISSED CHARAN SINGH AND HIS CHIEF LIEUTENANT, HEALTH MINISTER RAJ NARAIN,

ON THE GROUNDS OF INDISCIPLINED BEHAVIOR.

5. IN AN ANGRY AND DEFIANT MOOD, CHARAN SINGH HAS LAUNCHED BROAD-SIDE ATTACKS ON DESAI AND HIS PERSONALIZED THIS OFFENSIVE BY PUBLICLY AIRING ALLEGATIONS OF IMPROPER BUSINESS DEALINGS BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S SON, KANTIBHAI. DESAI MAY BE VULNERABLE, SINCE IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT KANTIBHAI'S RECORD IS BY NO MEANS CLEAN AND THAT AS HOME MINISTER CHARAN SINGH MAY HAVE AMASSED DAMAGING EVIDENCE AGAINST HIM. FOR HIS PART, THE PRIME MINISTER SEEMS TO BE IN NO MOOD FOR A RECONCILIATION WITH HIS FORMER HOME MINISTER.

6. THE BATTLE LINES IN THE RULING PARTY APPEAR TO BE HARDENING, AND CHARAN SINGH AND HIS FOLLOWERS MAY SOON BREAK AWAY FROM THE JANATA. HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT CHARAN SINGH'S GROUP IS ITSELF FRACTURED. WERE HE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE RULING PARTY, HE PROBABLY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO ATTRACT ENOUGH SUPPORTERS WITH HIM TO ENDANGER SERIOUSLY THE MAJORITY WHICH DESAI CURRENTLY ENJOYS IN PARLIAMENT. ALTHOUGH FOR THE MOMENT THE PRIME MINISTER SEEMS TO BE IN A SECURE POSITION IN THE CURRENT PARTY CRISIS, THE LONGER TERM OUTLOOK -- PARTICULARLY REGARDING THE KANTIBHAI ISSUE - IS LESS CERTAIN.

7. AS FOR THE OPPOSITION, FORMER PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI SPLIT THE CONGRESS PARTY ON JANUARY 2, 1978. SINCE THEN, HER PARTY, THE CONGRESS (I), HAS BECOME THE MAJOR OPPOSITION

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FORCE IN THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT AND IN MOST OF THE STATE ASSEMBLIES.

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## Message Attributes

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